

What is hoarding?

- Obtaining and refusing to throw out a large number of items that would appear to have little or no value to others
- Severe cluttering of a home to the point that it is no longer able to function as a viable living space



What are some of the items usually hoarded?

- Newspapers
- Magazines
- Personal Papers
- Clothing
- Furniture
- Appliances
- Boxes
- Rubbish
- Animals

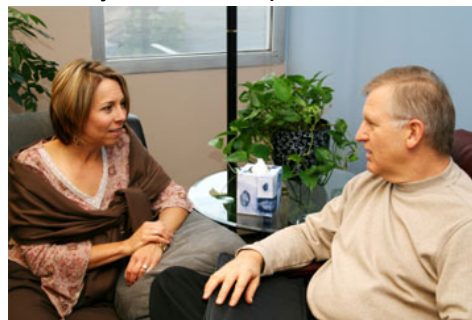
What are the causes of hoarding?

While the exact underlying causes of hoarding are unknown and are currently being studied, here are some of the underlying factors:

- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)
- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- Psychosis
- Demetia

How is hoarding treated?

- **Medication** - Research shows that some patients with hoarding tendencies do well when treated with anti-depressant medications.
- **Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy** Cognitive-behavioral therapy is a form of counseling that goes beyond "just talking." The therapist often visits the person's home and helps him or her learn how to make decisions and think clearly about their possessions.



Why do people hoard things?

Remember, hoarding is almost always caused by an underlying illness and is usually not caused by simple laziness. Here are some of the behaviors that cause hoarding:

- Items are perceived as valuable, even if they are old or damaged
- the items provide a sense of security
- there is a fear of losing valuable items
- the items are used as a substitute for love not found in other people
- a fear of losing valuable personal information
- physical limitations or illness may make it difficult to clean



Hoarding is much different than having simple clutter in your house and can cause many problems such as odors, fire safety issues, rodents and many times isolation. Hoarders are usually unaware that their lifestyle is a problem and rarely seek treatment on their own.

What are the dangers of hoarding?

- Increased risk of fire due to the accumulation of combustibles such as papers, clothing and rubbish poses a severe fire hazard.
- Blocked escape from fire due to the exits, hallways, windows and doors being obstructed by debris.
- Extreme risk to emergency response personnel
- Risk of structural damage due to the weight of the items being hoarded
- Risk of injury or death due to being trapped under falling debris
- Risk of disease, injury or infestation by insects or rodents



How can I help??

- Recognize the warning signs: cluttered living spaces, inability to discard items, difficulty managing daily tasks, poor organization, shame or embarrassment, limited or no social activities
- Speak to the person, or a member of their family about seeing a doctor or mental health professional
- If you believe the conditions are a health or safety risk to the person or community seek help from your local health department or social services agency
- In the event of an immediate emergency contact 911 right away



Hoarding and Fire Safety



Tips to make your home safer

